The Effectiveness of M-reader in Promoting Extensive Reading among Arab EFL Learners

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Abstract
Extensive reading (ER) is extremely important for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners as it helps them build vocabulary and develop their reading comprehension skills. However, engaging Arab EFL learners in ER might be a very difficult task especially when they lack motivation and enthusiasm. Therefore, the current study explores the effects of online ER tools such as M-reader on Arab EFL learners' motivation to read extensively and autonomously. M-reader is a free online tool which helps educational institutions to manage extensive reading. It supports students to read and understand graded readers by taking online quizzes which are available in its database. The study was conducted on first year college students enrolled in the General Foundation Programme at a private college in Oman where M-reader was introduced for the first time. The study attempted to identify how M-reader motivates Arab EFL learners for extensive reading and how it motivates them to become autonomous learners. To gauge the efficacy of M-reader and to identify the extent to which it has been successful with the selected sample, reading records from M-reader, student participations through questionnaires, focus interviews with top readers, and samples of motivational strategies used by the researcher were collected and analyzed. Findings revealed the learners' attitudes towards using M-reader as well as the discrepancies in feedback on whether they have developed an autonomous reading culture following exposure to M-reader.

Keywords: Arab EFL learners, extensive reading, General Foundation Programme, learner autonomy, M-reader

1. Introduction

A number of scholars believe that the Arab countries including Oman largely lack the culture of reading in English as well as Arabic (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016; Bell 2001). Similarly, Al Yacoub (2012 as cited in Al-Mahrooqi and Denman, 2016) claims that there is a very huge disparity between the Arab and the European children in terms of the minutes spent on reading every year. While the European child spends an average of 12,000 minutes on reading, the average Arab child, too sad to say, reads for only 6 minutes per year. The lack of reading culture among Arabs in general can be attributed to several factors including " late arrival of formal education systems", "lack of libraries", " a strong oral culture", "Arabic diglossic nature", "high rates of adult illiteracy", "social instability, and " traditional teaching methods" which mainly focus on "memorizations and recitation" (Al-Mahrooqi & Denamn, 2016, p. 6).

Similar to the other Arab nations, Omanis, who are the focus of this study, do not appreciate reading either in English or Arabic. This, according to Al-Musalli (2014), is due to several factors such as lack of libraries, high illiteracy rates among adults and parents, and the excessive homework and assignments done at home.

Erguvan (2016) adds that the lack of enthusiasm among Arabs to read is reflected in the ELT classes as the Arab children who join schools have an impression that reading is more of an "academic arduous task" which is "disconnected from the verbal reality of their world" (p. 139). Likewise, in a study conducted by Al Siyabi and Al Rashdi (2016) on 300 students in public schools in Al Dhakhilya Government in Oman, it was found that the frequency of reading among students is low since only 53% read once a semester and they limit their selection of reading to one genre. The study also revealed that same reading materials were chosen by the teachers regardless of their students' proficiency levels. As stated by (Al-Mahrooqi, 2010), Omani learners lack motivation to do extensive reading "because they connect all kinds of reading with academic study" (p.28). In addition, the situation does not seem to improve for Omani first-year college students since reading still remains as their weakest English language skills (Cobb, 1999). In a further study conducted by Al Yaaqubi and Al-Mahrooqi (2013) on 66 Omani university students majoring in English, it was found that a large number of participants (36%) read an average of one book and a half every semester while around 20% of them did not even read any book during the same period of time. Bani Orabah (2015) associates the Omani learners' poor reading skills in English to their poor reading skills in Arabic. He argues that they can solve the problems of reading in English if they can learn how to read adequately and properly in English.

It addition, based on the author's own experience with Omani learners, it can be said that they have very poor reading skills. In addition, they seem to lack motivation and enthusiasm to do extensive reading. In many cases, students say that they find reading to be the most boring skill.

They rarely read for pleasure unless they are awarded marks. The current study, therefore, attempts to explore the effects of using online extensive reading tools, namely the M-reader, on motivating Omani EFL learners to read and promoting a culture of reading among them.

2. Extensive reading

Extensive reading (ER) is defined by Bamford and Day (2003), as "an approach to language learning in which learners read a lot of easy material in the new language" (p.1). According to Grabe & Stoller (2002), extensive reading provides opportunities for the learners to get exposed to "large quantities of material within their linguistic competence, which is, at the same time, pleasurable". (p. 259). Similarly, a widely accepted definition is given by Davis (1995) who summarizes the concept of extensive reading:" pupils are given the time, encouragement and materials to read pleasurably, at their own level, as many books as they can, without the pressures of testing or marks" (p.329).
Day & Bamford (2002) suggest 10 principles of extensive reading for students.

1. The reading material is easy.
2. A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available.
3. Learners choose what they want to read.
4. Learners read as much as possible.
5. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding.
6. Reading is its own reward.
7. Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower.
8. Reading is individual and silent.
9. Teachers orient and guide their students.
10. The teacher is the role model of a reader.
(P.137-141).

The definitions and characteristics of ER given above agree on key elements which distinguish the process of extensive reading. Reading a lot of material which is easy and suitable to the learners' own levels, with pleasure and enjoyment, without being worried about marks or tests, and under the supervision of teachers are the most important distinguishing characteristics of any ER programme.

A lot of studies have shown that ER has benefits in second language acquisition. For example, involving learners in ER activities increases their motivation (Day & Bamford, 1998; Takase, 2007), confidence (Arnold, 2009), and positive attitude towards reading in the target language (Leung, 2002). Similarly, other researchers such as Nation (1997) argue that ER improves the learners' proficiency in all the language skills. In addition, extensive reading can help learners improve themselves as it is an activity that can be done individually by which learners have the freedom to read whatever they like and whenever they want (Usul, 2017). Nakanishi (2014) suggests that extensive reading should be made part of the language learning curriculum as it helps in improving the reading proficiency of students. Richards & Schmidt (2010) claim that ER develops good reading habits and vocabulary, and makes learners like reading. To add, Donaghy (2016) mentions seven benefits of ER for students which include gains in their reading

and writing competence, vocabulary growth, overall language competence, an increase in their motivation to learn, and more empathy and learner autonomy among them.

Furthermore, studies show a correlation between ER and learner autonomy. For instance, Son (2017) states that extensive reading has improved "learner autonomy, vocabulary learning, writing, and attitude towards reading" (p.18). Son also believes that extensive reading can enhance the autonomy among learners as they become free to choose reading books of their interests and feel more motivated to learn the language. Learner autonomy, which is viewed as "an attitude towards learning in which the learner is prepared to take, or does take, responsibility for his own learning" (Dickinson, 1995, p. 167) can be nurtured through ER programmes (Imrie, 2007).

In spite of the above mentioned benefits of ER, some researchers argue that implementing ER programmes has some problems including lack of reading materials, insufficient preparations of teachers, the teacher-centred views of learning, and lack of time for teachers as they face a great deal of pressure to complete the syllabus (Jacobs, 2002).

In addition, studies report that some teachers have shown two major concerns on the use of extensive reading. One concern expressed by them is pedagogical, that is, their ability to judge how thoroughly the students have read (Brown, 2012; Robb & Kano, 2013) and the other concern is related to the availability of time in class to organize extensive reading programmes (Day & Bamford, 1998). According to McBride & Milliner (2018), the use of online extensive reading tools such as M-reader offers solutions to some of the challenges mentioned above.

3. M-reader

 M-reader (available at https://mreader.org):
Is a browser-based version of the Moodle Reader that was developed in Japan. It is supported by various graded reader publishers and is intended to be easy for administrators, teachers, and students to use. The site can be used free of charge by any legitimate educational institution (para 1).

M-reader supports educational institutions including schools and universities planning to manage ER in a more effective way. It allows students to take short timed quizzes with 10 random questions drawn from a question bank of 20-30 items in order to give each student an opportunity to answer different set of questions. The questions are multiple choice of three types: "who said this?", "true/false", and "event ordering" (Mcbride & Milliner, 2018). M-reader allows teachers to control the frequency of quizzes taken by students and increase/decrease the level of difficulty they may take a quiz on (para 2 &3). M-reader uses the 'Kyoto Scale' to equate the reading levels of books from various publishers. This scale places books and graded readers in terms of difficulty on a 10-point level starting from 0 to level 9 ("Kyoto Scale M-reader", n.d.) In M-reader, the reading goal is set as the number of words rather than the number of books. There are around 6000 quizzes available on M-reader which test the reader's understanding of the plots and characters rather than the memory of specific information of the book (McBride & Milliner, 2018; Ishimaki, K. & Milliner, 2017). The number of books, their titles and levels, and the number of words read are recorded in the database making it more convenient for both the students and teachers to track this information. As illustrated in Figure 1, teachers can monitor their students' reading progress.

Figure 1. Example of students' class summary available for teachers on M-reader

The research on M-reader confirms its effectiveness in supporting ER. For instance, McBride and Milliner (2018) recommend M-reader as they find it to be an effective tool for both teachers and students. They add that M-reader allows teachers "to manage graded reader activity effectively in terms of logistics and pedagogical principles" (p.104). Similarly, Allan (2014) finds M-reader to be "affordable", "accessible", and "motivational (para.4). Although Campbell (2012) agrees that M-reader allows teachers to easily access their students' extensive reading activities outside the classroom, he argues that several complaints have been reported by his students such as "website freezing or slowing down, finding books with available quizzes on Moodle Reader [M-reader], a confusing graded reader level chart, and not being able to take more than one quiz per day" (p. 102). In addition, students cheating, that is, a student colluding or trying to answer quizzes on behalf of another, is one of the major concerns raised by teachers as stated by Ishimaki & Milliner (2017).

Based on the author's experience with M-reader, it can be said that the programme requires minimal technical efforts by both students and teachers. It has a user-friendly interface and encourages students to use it anywhere and anytime. Students can take quizzes, after selecting the suitable grader readers, in class, in the lab, or even at home through their mobiles or laptops. However, if not properly monitored by teachers, possibilities of cheating the system might become very high among students who might take the quizzes on behalf of each other. Please visit the M-reader website at (https://mreader.org) to know more details.

4. The research site
The current study was conducted on Omani learners enrolled in the General Foundation Programme (GFP) offered at Middle East College (MEC), in the Sultanate of Oman. The GFP is a one-year trimester preparatory programme designed for freshmen students who join institutions of higher education in Oman. It aims at helping students equip the skills and knowledge necessary to perform competently in their academic programmes. On successful completion of the GFP, students are expected to attain the required degree of proficiency in four major components, namely, English language, Mathematics, Computing, and Study Skills. The English component of the MEC GFP comprises three levels of 14 weeks each. Each level of English consists of three modules or skills: Writing Skills, Reading Skills, Listening and Speaking Skills. In addition, one module named Basic Study Skills is offered separately in level 1, while in the other two levels

study skills are incorporated in the curriculum. All students willing to join the college set for a Placement Test which determines the levels in which they are placed. Students could qualify for different levels in English language, Mathematics, and Computing depending on their level of proficiency ("Centre for Foundation Studies", n.d.).Students are assessed using a combination of summative and formative assessments. Assessments are in the form of mid-term exams and end-semester exams as well as continuous assessments (in projects, oral presentation, portfolios, and extensive reading). Since the focus of the current study is on extensive reading, the author will give a brief explanation on how this component is assessed at the research site.

Before M-reader was formally introduced in the GFP, students were asked to select at least one graded reader from the college library, read it, and give an assessed oral summary in front of their teachers. The process was very tedious as the teacher had to listen to a large number of students giving a presentation in the same monotonous way. In addition, there was no guarantee that the students had fully comprehended the stories they had read. In many cases, students used to read the summary given at the back cover of the graded readers or read its Arabic translated version. In addition, each student could read, on average, one story in a semester. A lot of students did not seem to be motivated to read. Unfortunately, the ultimate goal of extensive reading was not met in many cases. For this, there was an urgent need to look for a more effective method that promotes extensive reading among students and motivates them to read more frequently. M-reader was first introduced in the MEC GFP in Fall 2017. To register the institution on M-reader, the author contacted Dr. Tom Robb, the developer of the site, who gave him the authorization with administrative features to configure all the students and teachers. Target word counts and the reading difficulty levels were set for each GFP level. M-reader is flexible in such a way that students can read books at the same level set for them, one level below, or one level above. Table 1 explains the target word counts and the reading difficulty levels set by the author for each level.

Table 1. *Target word count mapped against the reading difficulty level in Fall 2017*

Level	Goal	Actual reading level (as set by the author)	Ability to read levels
Level 1	3000 words	1	0,1,2
Level 2	6000 words	2	0,1,2,3
Level 3	9000 words	3	0,1,2,3,4

5. Research questions
    1. How does M-reader motivate Arab EFL learners for extensive reading?
    2. How does M-Reader motivate Arab EFL learners to be autonomous readers?
    3. What are the learners' perceptions of M-reader as online extensive reading tool?

4. To what extent has the use of M Reader been successful in changing the learners' reading attitudes?

6. Methodology
6.1. Research design

To answer the research questions, a mixed methods approach was used in collecting and analyzing data which included both quantitative and qualitative methods. As for the quantitative methods, records of the students' reading performance were retrieved from M-reader's database. The records included the number of words read, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the target words, and the number of quizzes taken throughout one academic semester, namely, Fall 2017. Additionally, the students' perceptions of M-reader were collected through an online questionnaire. To motivate students to actively use M-reader and to develop a competitive spirit among them, lists of top readers were announced publicly. As for the qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three of the top readers.

6.2. Participants

Participants of this study were 725 students enrolled in the GFP in Fall 2017. The largest number of students was in level 1 of the pragramme with a total of 402 (55.4%), students in level 2 were 121 (16.7%) while 202 students were in level 3 (27.9%).

However, the number of participants who answered the online questionnaire drastically went down. Only 431 students of all levels (59.4%) responded to the questionnaire. This could be due to the fact that by the time the questionnaire was administered to the students, it was already towards the end of the semester and students were busy doing their end-semester exams.

7. Findings and discussion

In this section, findings of the study will be discussed. The findings are interpreted to answer the research questions as follows.

7.1. The impact of M-reader on students' motivation

As explained in figures 2, 3, and 4, the majority of students (56.99%, 68.48%, and 50.77% respectively) said that M-reader had motivated them to read more. In Figure 2, 56.99% of the students agreed that they have enjoyed doing M-reader quizzes and they were motivated to read.
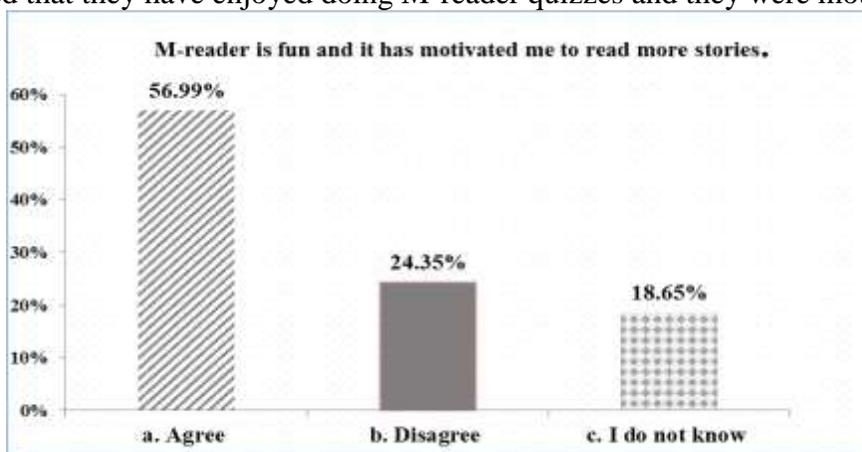

Figure 2. Students' responses to the question on M-reader and motivation

Moreover, as shown in Figure 2, the vast majority of students (68.48%) said that their level of motivation increased when seeing their school summary (which includes the number of words they have successfully read) shown on their M-reader page.
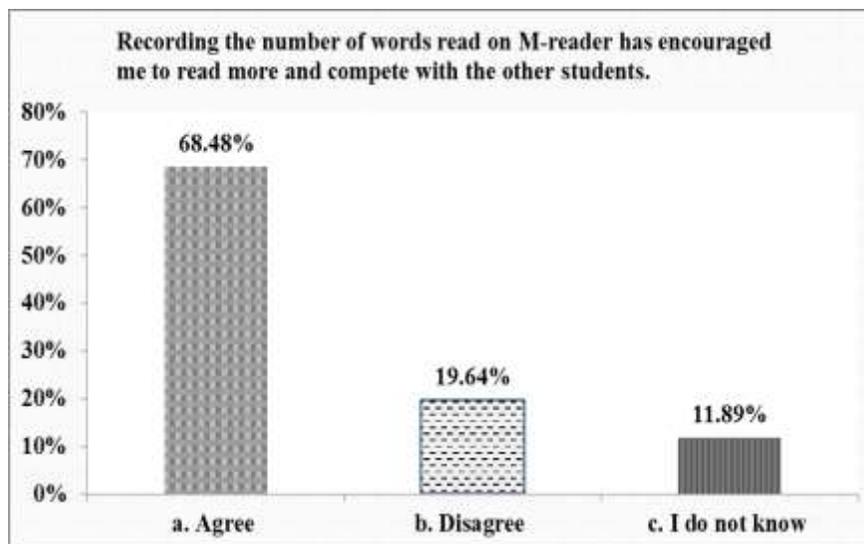
Recording the number of words read on M-reader has encouraged me to read more and compete with the other students.

a. Agree	68.48%
b. Disagree	19.64%
c. I do not know	11.89%

Figure 3. Students' responses to the question on reading records and motivation

To motivate students to actively use M-reader and to develop a competitive spirit among them, lists of top readers with their levels, sessions, and word counts were announced publicly through e-mails (to all GFP students). Short videos containing lists of top readers were also shown on the department plasma TV on a weekly basis. The students' reading behavior was monitored before and after such announcements were made. A total of 4 videos were created and shown to serve the purpose mentioned above. The videos were shown in weeks 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the semester.
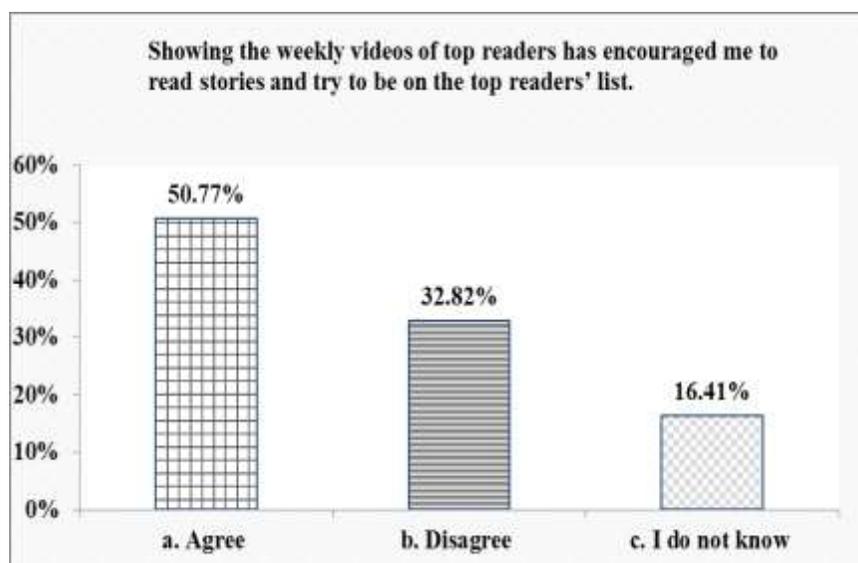
Showing the weekly videos of top readers has encouraged me to read stories and try to be on the top readers' list.

a. Agree	50.77%
b. Disagree	32.82%
c. I do not know	16.41%

Figure 4. Students' viewpoints of showing videos of top readers

As illustrated in Figure 4 above, more than half of the respondents (50.77%) believed that the videos had a positive impact on their motivation. On the other hand, 32.82% gave a negative response and 16.41% had no idea. It could be that those respondents (49.23% put together) have not paid attention to the top reader announcements although each video was shown on the plasma TV for the whole week. Other factors related to competitiveness and jealousy among students could have contributed to their negative responses.

Nevertheless, the students' reading behaviours across the three GFP levels showed improvement in the mid of the semester compared to the beginning and end of the semester as explained in figures 5, 6, and 7.
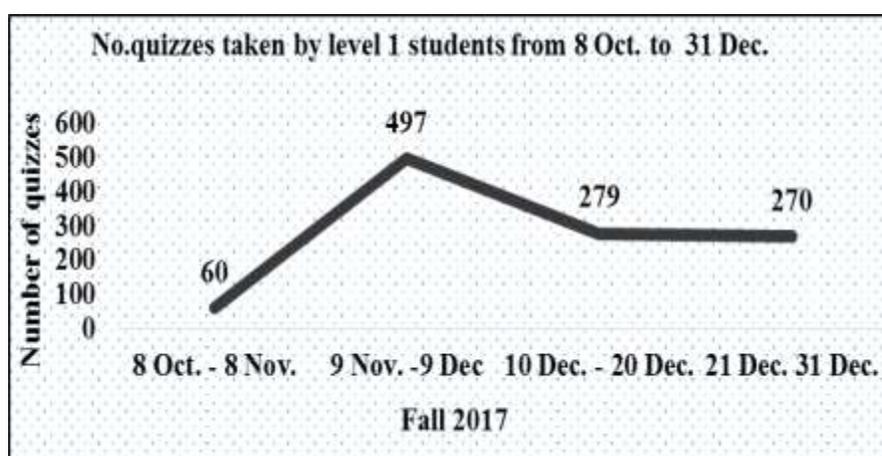

Figure 5. The number of M-reader quizzes taken by level 1 students in Fall 2017

Figure 5 shows the number of quizzes taken by level 1 students in the period from 8 October to 31 December 2017. All the quizzes taken by the students, whether passed or failed, were counted. As clearly shown, the students' reading behaviour in the first 4 weeks of the semester (from 8 October to 8 November) was poor since they only took 60 quizzes. However, in the mid of the semester, particularly from 9 November to 9 December, students had the most active reading behaviour with a total of 497 quizzes taken. After the midterm, their reading behaviour began to decline until it became steady towards the end of the semester with a total number of 270 quizzes on 31 December 2017.

Similarly, level 2 students had a very slow start with 67 quizzes taken in the first 4 weeks of the semester. Their reading behaviour improved in the mid of the semester as reflected in the highest number of quizzes taken by them (155). However, they started becoming less active once again after the midterm exam, more precisely, from 10 December to 31 December with the least number of quizzes taken (42 only).
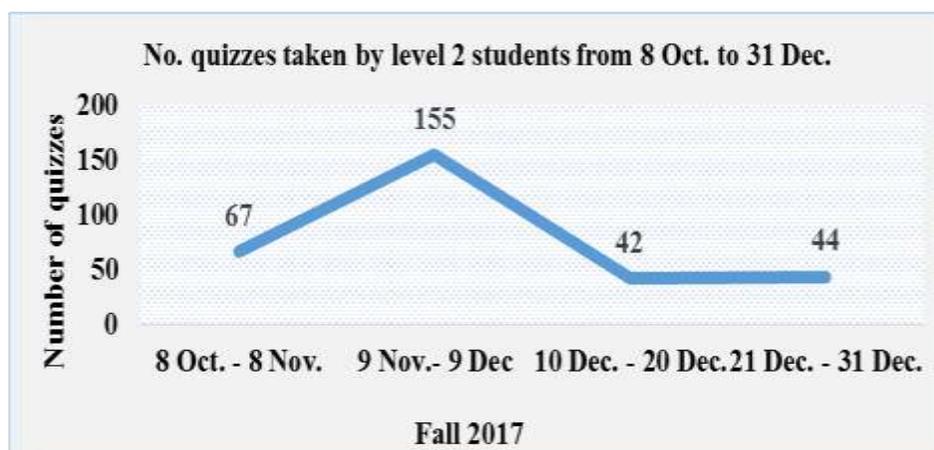
Figure 6. The number of M-reader quizzes taken by level 2 students in Fall 2017

Likewise, it was a slow-paced beginning for level 3 students from 8 October to 8 November with a total of 55 quizzes as explained in Figure 7.
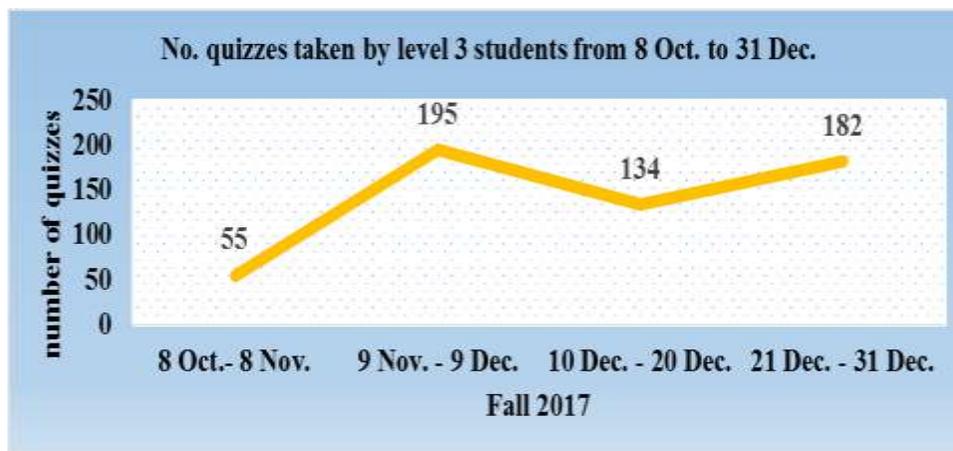

Figure 7. The number of M-reader quizzes taken by level 3 students in Fall 2017

However, similar to level 1 and 2 students, the period from 9 November to 9 December was the most active for level 3 students as they took the highest number of quizzes (195). Their reading behaviour, on the other hand, started to decline immediately after the midterm exam with a total number of 134 quizzes though the number slightly went up once again towards the end of the semester with a total of 182 quizzes taken.

By looking at the GFP students' reading behaviours in Fall 2017, the following findings can be summerised.

1. Students were active the most in the mid of the semester (weeks 5- 9), from 9th November to 9th December.
2. Students were the least active in the first four weeks of the semester (8 October to November).
3. The students' reading behaviour began to slow down after mid-semester (10 December to 20 December).
4. Towards the end of the semester (from 21 December until 31 December) their reading behavior reached a plateau except for level 3 students who showed some improvement.

There are several factors which could have contributed to the active reading behaviour of students in the mid of the semester. First, more graded readers were purchased on 23 November. The college library was enriched with 217new graded readers. Thus, students were able to read more. Second, some motivational strategies were adopted. For instance, weekly e-mails on top readers were sent to the department faculty members and students. In addition, the videos were shown on the department plasma TV. By tracing the dates of these videos, it was found that they were shown to students in the period from 29 October until 27 November. The videos also included some motivational expressions and sentences. As discussed above, it was found that the most active reading behaviour of the students was from 9 November to 9 December. This could be due to the impact of watching these videos during the said period of time. However, once no more videos after week 7, it was noticed the students' reading behaviour started slowing down as explained above.

On the other hand, some other factors might have negatively affected the students' reading behaviour. To start with, there was a limited number of books available in the library, particularly for levels 1 and 2, as compared to the number of registered students. At the beginning of the semester, 523 books were available in the library for 725 students (ratio of 5:7). As a result, most of the sessions of levels 1 and 2 could not start on time. There was a delay of 5 weeks until the new graded readers were received. The findings indicate that students have become more active in taking quizzes towards the mid of the semester and this was the time these books were purchased. Therefore, there is a good reason to believe that increasing the book supply could have encouraged students to start reading. In addition, M-reader was introduced for the first time. Since little orientation was given on M-reader, both teachers and students needed more sufficient time to digest the programme. This has made some teachers reluctant to start M-reader with their students. As also indicated above, the students' reading behaviour became less active in the last quarter of the semester. The reason for this could be attributed to the fact that students were preparing for the end-semester exams.
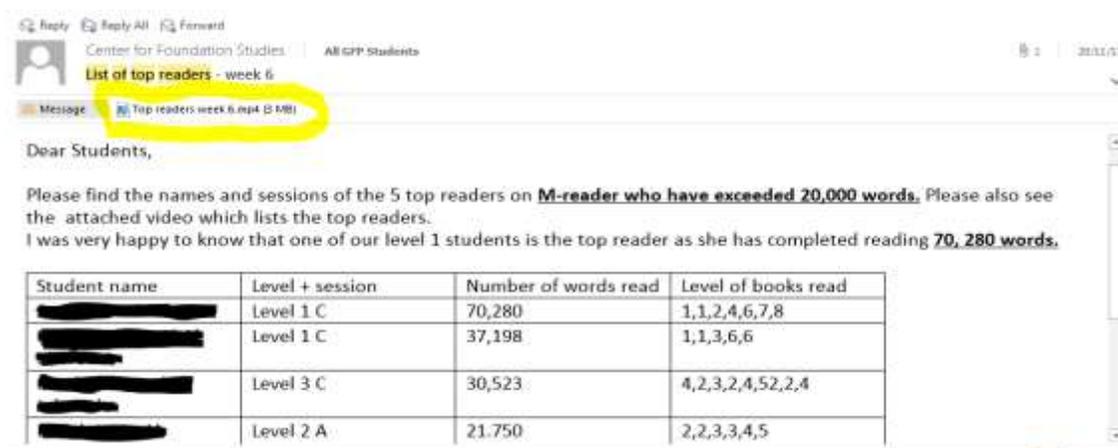
Figure 8. Screenshot of an e-mail sent to all GFP students about the Top Reader

The screenshot shown in Figure 8 is an example of one of the e-mails sent to all GFP students by which the names of the top readers, their levels, sessions, and the number of words read were mentioned. It also included an attached video containing the same information. In addition, to motivate students, the videos also included some motivational expressions and phrases as illustrated in the screenshots given in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9. Screenshots of a video shown to students in week 6

Table 2 shows the top readers of each level. Interestingly, a level 1 student was listed as the top reader with a total of 292, 671 words read by the end of the semester. This student was highly motivated and had a positive impact on her classmates.

Table 2. *List of top readers of each level and the total words they have read*

Target words set for the level	Number of words read	Level
3000	292,671	Level 1
6000	232,906	Level 2
9000	30,036	Level 3

In a personal interview with the top reader and when asked about the most interesting thing about M-reader, she responded that "M-reader give[s] us the chance to compete not only at college level but also at global level" (Personal communication, February 18, 2018). She also mentioned three main reasons that motivated her to continue reading "First I like the M-reader and reading. Second, I want to learn English and this is the best and easier [easiest] way to learn any language. Third, I want to be the top reader".

Another top reader shared similar views on his experience with M-reader. However, he stated that he was more interested in developing new vocabulary more than the number of words.

"*Actually I am not interesting [interested] about the words. I only want to …err… to get the benefits of reading…so that makes me read a lot. I am not interesting [interested] about how many words I have read"* (personal communication, February 25, 2018).

When asked about the impact of weekly top readers list and videos, the third top reader confirmed its impact on motivating her to read. She said "when I see this [weekly videos] I waitng this list. When I read I see my name, I support [not clear] more time I read more stories" (Personal communication, February 19, 2018).

To conclude this section, findings indicate that M-reader has been a motivating factor for students to read more especially when they pass the quizzes and increase their word count. This is in line with the claims of some researchers that M-reader increases motivation among students when they pass quizzes (Curtis, 2015) as these quizzes "seemed to boost the self-efficacy of a number of students" (Robb, 2015, p. 149). In addition, there seems to be a correlation between high levels of motivation and improvement in the students' reading behaviour as discussed above. It was found that when students were highly motivated during the mid of the semester due to factors related to passing quizzes, encouragement through e-mails, videos, and top reader lists top and availability of books, the students' reading behaviour was the most active. However, findings indicate that the students' motivation started to decline after the mid-of the semester. According to (Gheetham, Harper, Melody & Ito, 2016), "maintaining motivation over an extended period of time is difficult as many factors can influence the learning process" (p. 14).

7.2. Completion of the reading goals

In this section, the author will discuss the reading behaviour of students in terms of completion of the reading goals set for each level. Specific word counts were given for each level as follows: 3000 words for level 1, 6000 words for level 2, and 9000 words for level 3 respectively.
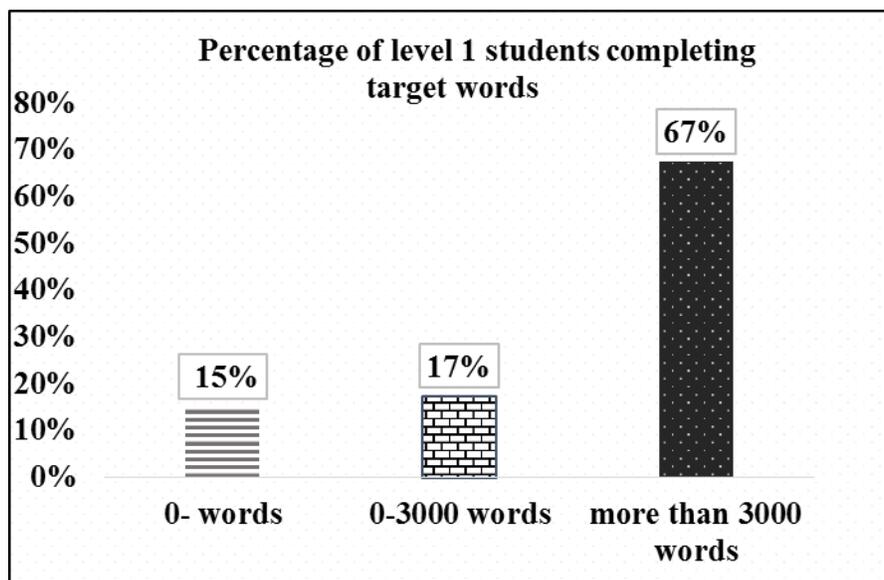
Figure 10. Percentage of level 1 students completing the reading goal

As explained in Figure 10 above, the majority of students (67%) exceeded the word count set for them and continued reading. On the other hand, 15 % did not read at all while 17% read less than 3000 words. Likewise, a 65% of level 2 students have exceeded the goal compared to 23% who have not read anything. 12% failed to reach the goal.
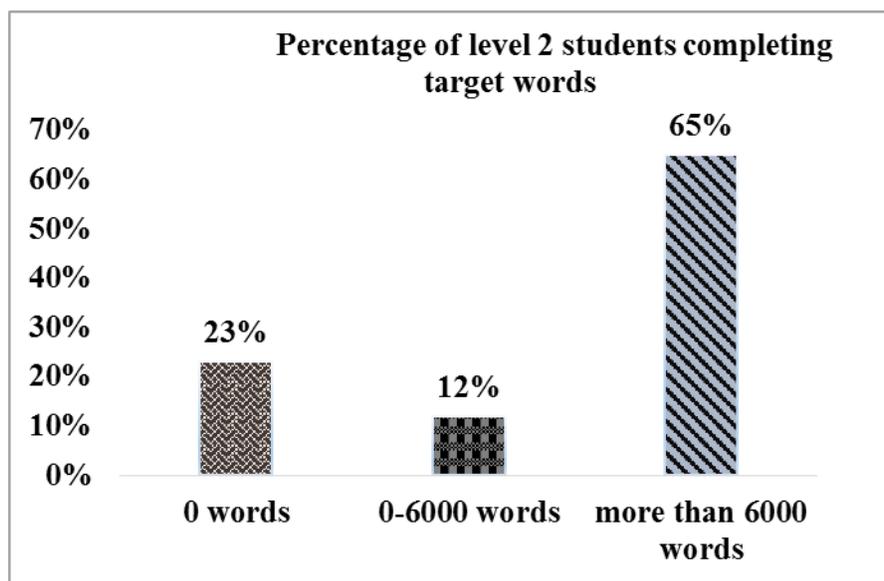

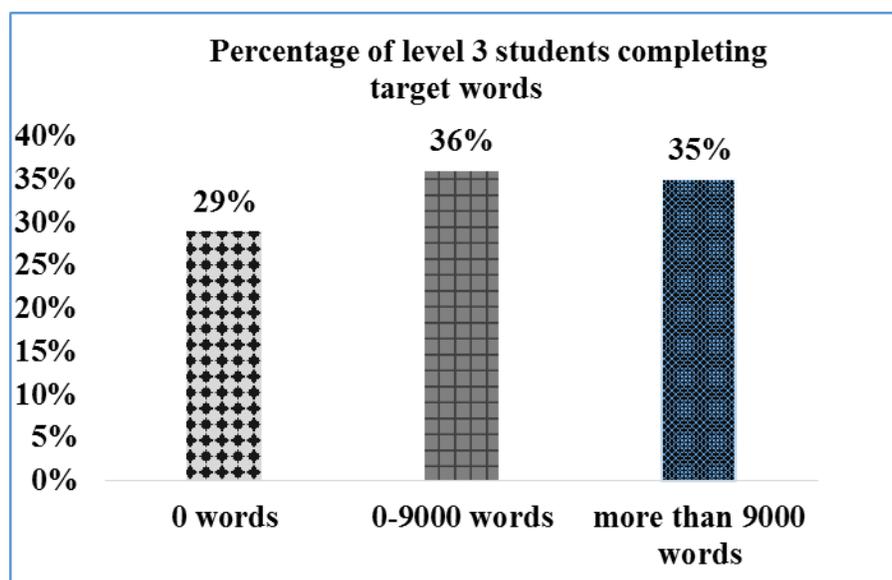*Figure 11.* Percentage of level 2 students completing the reading goal

Figure 12. Percentage of level 3 students completing the reading goal

Unlike level 1 and 2 students, the majority of level 3 students failed to achieve the reading goal. Only 35% of the students exceeded the word count set for them. Level 3 students seemed to be less motivated than students of the other two levels. A reasonable explanation could be that those students are at the exit level of the GFP. Therefore, by the time they have reached level 3, they might have lost enthusiasm and might have become more careless to learn English at this level. Oppositely, findings indicate that students of levels 1 and 2 were more motivated. This was also reflected in the number of quizzes taken by the students of these two levels.

7.3. Learner autonomy

Findings showed some success of M-reader in enhancing the learner autonomy among students. M-reader has provided a platform which promotes learner autonomy among the students. It was left for the students to make their own decisions in terms of selecting what to read, when to read, and when to take the quiz. Students were given the freedom to take the quizzes whether in the class or at home with minimal interventions from the teachers. The teachers' role was more on giving guidance and monitoring their students' reading progress. The type of support mainly given by teachers was technical (i.e. helping students retrieve their forgotten passwords) and motivational. This was reflected in the students' responses to the question on how enthusiastic and supportive their teachers were. As explained in Figure 13 below, 68.88% of the students believed that their teachers were enthusiastic about M-reader and that they kept encouraging them to continue reading.
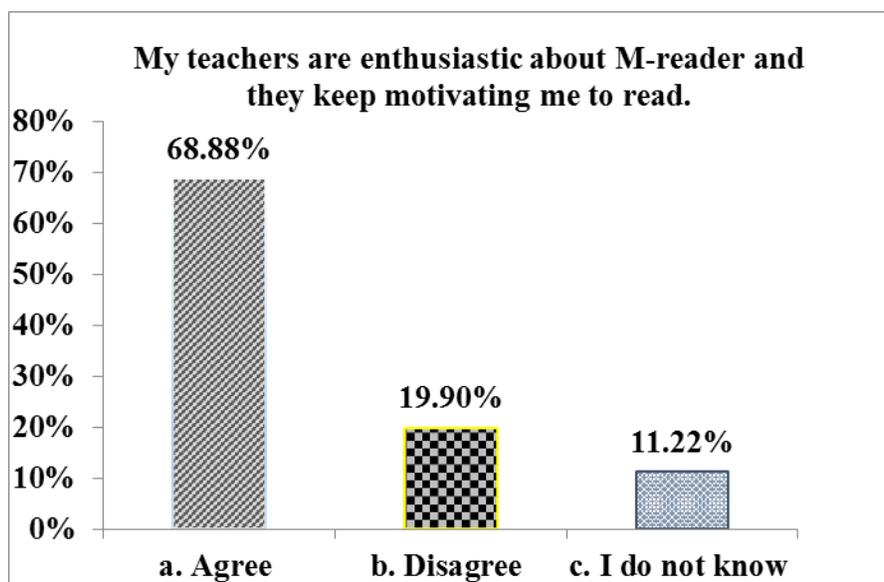
Figure 13. Students' viewpoints of their teacher's support

The findings seem to agree with the claims of the developer of M-reader, Dr. Tom Robb that M-reader supports learner autonomy among students "as it places part of their learning in their own hands:
   1) They decide what they want to read
   2) They decide whether the reading material is at a suitable level for them.
   3) They decide when to read.
   4) It is up to the student to decide how much to read beyond the minimum requirement
    set by the teacher.
   5) The 'gamification' elements such as the leaderboard, progress part and level
    promotion challenge the students to keep going.
   6) The 'gamification' elements also encourage competition among students.
   (Personal communication, April 19, 2018)

However, giving full accountability to students could lead to issues of colluding and cheating. There were some cases were students took quizzes on behalf of each other through exchanging their passwords. As a result, it was decided at a later stage not to give full freedom for the students in using M-reader. Students were not allowed to take the quizzes at home and their passwords were constantly changed by their teachers to reduce possibilities of cheating as much as possible.

7.4. Students' written perceptions
This section will discuss the written responses of students where they have given their suggestions and comments on M-reader. Table 3 below summarises the written comments given by the students.

Table 3. *Types of students' comments and their percentage*

Type of comment	%
Positive	26%
Negative	15.3%
Thank you/ no comments	34%
Suggestions	5%
Unclear comments	4%
Issues with books	14%
Some doubts about the effectiveness of M-reader (i.e. cheating)	1.7%

Table 4 shows samples of the students' comments on M-reader. Some of the comments were translated into English to serve the purpose of the study.

Table 4. *Samples of students' open-ended comments and suggestions*

Type of comment	Samples taken from students' responses
Positive	- "It is easy, interesting and motivating". - "I like M-reader and there are no negative in this programme".
Negative	- "It is a very difficult programme" - "It is very complicated especially for part time students". - "First, sometime the stories we pick is above our level, it written in the story that it is level 2, but when we check it in the M-reader it shows that it is level 3 or 4 which we can't do a quiz on it. Second, some stories are hard to understand. For example, the adventure of Tom Sawyer. This story I read it and while Im reading I couldn't link the events together, it language is hard. Thats all. Thanks for reading my comment."

Thank you/no comments	- "No comments thank you"
Suggestions	- Rules of taking M-reader quizzes should be made stricter. The quiz should be under the teacher's supervision. I would also like to draw the attention of the M-reader administrators that they should check the credibility of the marks obtained by the students (translated by the author). - "I have problems with the stories borrowed from the library. Please provide electronic copies".
Unclear comments	ليش بين قصه واختبار قصه ثانيه 10 ،ايام - Why do we have to wait 10 days between quizzes? (translated by the author) Note: The time set for students to wait until they could take another quiz was 36 hours and not 10 days.
Issues with the availability of books/graded readers	- "Please bring more stories". - Increase the number of books in the library (translated by the author)
Some doubts about the effectiveness of M-reader (i.e. cheating)	نلاحظ بعض الطلبة يقرؤن قصص كبيرة ومستوى عالي اكبر من لفل 1 فكيف يستطيعون الاجابة على الاسئلة - Some students read big stories with a difficulty level higher than their actual level (level 1) How can they answer the answer the questions (pass the quizzes)? (Translated by the author)

7.5 Concerns about M-reader

Based on the author's own experience with M-reader as well as concerns raised by students and teachers, the following issues have been observed.

1. The number of books available in the library was insufficient. As mentioned earlier, 523 books were available in the library for 725 students. This was one of the major problems for students who found difficulties in finding books suitable to their reading level. This explains the slow-paced beginning with M-reader as the majority of the students could start reading only after 5 weeks of its implementation in Fall 2017. 65.13% of students expressed their disappointment with the limited number of books, which according to them, was a hindrance to continue reading. In addition, there were many books in the library which had no quizzes available on M-reader.
2. Incidents of cheating were observed. Some students attempted to answer quizzes on behalf of others after exchanging their passwords.

3. Some technical issues were also noticed. The most frequently recurring problems were with students and teachers forgetting their M-reader passwords.

4. Some teachers lacked enthusiasm and seemed reluctant to use M-reader. It was observed that sessions whose teachers did not give enough motivation and encouragement had high numbers of students not taking the quizzes regularly.

8. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to explore the effectiveness of M-reader in motivating Arab EFL learners for extensive reading as well as enhancing their learner autonomy. Their perceptions of M-reader were also collected through an online questionnaire.

Findings of the study revealed that M-reader was effective in motivating students to do extensive reading. It was also found that the motivational strategies adopted by the author had a positive impact on the students' attitudes towards reading and the use of M-reader. In addition, limited number of books, lack of teachers' motivation and guidance, and technical issues were some factors which could have affected the students' reading behaviour. Although there is no way to directly measure 'learner autonomy (Tom Robb, personal communication, April 19, 2018), findings provide good reasons to argue that M-reader helps promote autonomous learning among students. To add, out of the 10 extensive reading principles suggested by Day and Bamford (2002), it can be said that 'reading for pleasure, freedom of selecting the reading material, reading as much as possible, reading being its own reward, reading easy material, and orientation and guidance by teachers are strongly associated with M-reader.

9. Limitations of the study

Although this study revealed significant findings, the limitations below need to be addressed in future studies.

1. Pilot study before implementation was not conducted.
2. There seems to be lack of technical expertise among some teachers.
3. There was limited number of books in the library.
4. Only 59.4% students responded to the online questionnaire.
5. Preventive measures to control malpractice were not taken.
6. There was a focus on the number of words and developing a reading culture rather than other sub-skills such as vocabulary enrichment.
7. Teachers' perceptions were not collected.
8. No in-depth interviews were conducted with students who failed to meet the reading goals.

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